INYO COUNTY FREE LIBRARY HISTORY

July 1913 - January 1932

Like so many other libraries, the Inyo County Library owes its beginnings to a Woman's Club - the Woman's Improvement Club of Bishop. Among many other activities, this club early interested itself in a library project for Bishop, and established a reading room with about 200 books and a number of magazines, on the main street. Funds were lacking for a custodian, and some youngsters of the town failed to respect the property, which caused the reading room to be abandoned. The Woman's Improvement Club library was for a time kept in Callahan and Leidy's drug store. Early in 1912, plans were formulated to secure a Carnegie library, public park, and civic center. When shortly thereafter the idea of county libraries began to be agitated, there was already an interest which was easily increased. No other portion of the state seemed more in need of the help which a county library might bring. Cut off from the outside world by the highest range of the Sierras to the west and north, by mountainous deserts to the east and south, with no highways, only recently connected with the south by railway, their business and social connections with a city were with San Francisco, over two days' journey away, and the community remained a pioneer society in most respects. Book-lovers bought their books as occasion offered, and Owens Valley was a happy hunting ground for the book agent. Naturally the advantages of a county library were keenly appreciated by a part of the citizens, but by the majority no reading habit had ever been formed, and no need of such service was felt.

In July 1913, Miss Harriet G. Eddy, State Library Organizer, appeared before the Board of Supervisors and discussed with them the County Library plan. In the Minutes of the Board, of July 7 1913, appears the following:

Miss H. G. Eddy, representing the State Library at Sacramento, appeared before the Board and considerable time was spent in the matter of establishing a County Free Library for the county. ...

Further consideration was had regarding County Free Library, after which motion was carried adopting the following resolution. Vote on the motion as follows. Ayes: S. H. Reynolds, N. J. Cooley, R. W. Thomas. Noes: J. H. Lubken, W. R. Ford.

Whereas, An act entitled "An act to provide for the establishment and maintainance of county free libraries in the State of California, and repealing an act entitled, "An act to provide County library systems," Approved April 12th, 1909, and all acts and parts of acts in conflict with this act, approved February 25th, 1911, has made it possible for the Board of Supervisors to establish a county free library for Inyo County, and

Whereas, The establishment of such a county free library will be for the best interests and welfare of the people of said county; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Supervisors of Inyo County, State of California, hereby declares that it contemplates the establishment of a county free library for Inyo County under the provisions of said Act, and that at a meeting to be held on Monday the 15th day of September, A. D. 1913, at 10 o'clock A. M. in its rooms in the County Courthouse, it will take under consideration such establishment, and the Board hereby invites expression of opinion from the people,

and the Clerk of this Board is hereby directed to publish a notice of such contemplated action, together with the time and place in the a weekly newspaper, at least once a week for two consecutive weeks, as required by law.

Adopted July 7th, 1913.

Attest: W. L. Hunter, R. W. Thomas,

Clerk, Board of Supervisors. Chairman, Board of Supervisors.

The idea was at once taken up with enthusiasm by the Bishop people who had been working toward a library of their own, and fortunately this included the owners and editors of the two Bishop weekly papers, the Owens Valley Herald and the Inyo Register. W. A. Chalfant, of the Inyo Register, was an "Inyo County boy", and his opinions, always well considered, carried the weight of an old resident. Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Parcher, who owned the Herald, were comparative newcomers, but as this was not their first experience in getting a public library in their town, and as they were enthusiastic boosters, the influence of the Herald was valuable in the campaign. Other towns joined in furthering the project, committees were formed to circulate petitions, and evidently as the date approached for the decision, one could not pass a street-corner without being urged to sign up for the County Library. Arguments were presented frequently in the papers, and to read the record of those days, it would appear that the county was a unit for the library.

This was not the case, however. The silent majority was partly indifferent, and partly vigorously opposed. It was probably very fortunate that Miss Eddy came up in September, and spent some days before the final hearing before the Supervisors, presenting the case of county libraries in the various towns.

At the meeting of the Board, September 15th, 1913, petitions were presented from all the Owens Valley towns except Big Pine. Their long list of names was delayed in the mails, and did not reach Independence in time for the meeting. However, the delegation of citizens, the number of petitions, and the ready answer to all questions on the part of Miss Eddy, changed the vote of the Supervisors from three for the first to five for the final resolution, despite opposition of some heavy tax-payers, who insisted on a promise - never kept - that the library tax should not exceed four cents. (This promise is not of record.)

From the minutes of the Board of Supervisors, September 15th, 1913:

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Inyo, State of California, met at the above time.

In accordance with former resolution passed, Board proceeded to consider the establishment of a County Free Library. Petitions signed by residents of various sections of the County favoring same were presented and read. W. A. Chalfant, W. C. Parcher, L. C. Hall and wife of Bishop, and Miss H. G. Eddy, County Library Organizer from Sacramento, appeared and urged the establishment of same. The matter was carefully investigated and thoroughly discussed by all present. ... After further discussion upon the matter of the establishment of a County Free Library motion carried passing and adopting the following resolution:

RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTAINANCE OF A COUNTY FREE LIBRARY FOR INYO COUNTY

WHEREAS, It is fitting and just for the best interest and welfare of the people of Inyo County, that they be given every proper privilege for education, culture and pleasure; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of a county free library in Inyo County would offer such means for advancement and improvement; and

WHEREAS, By an act entitled "An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of county free libraries in the State of California , and repealing an act entitled, "An act to provide county library systems," approved April 12, 1909, and all acts and parts of acts in conflict with this act", approved February 25th, 1911, the board of supervisors of any county may establish a county free library; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of Inyo County has taken the necessary steps prescribed by law preliminary to the establishment of a county free library; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of Inyo County, State of California, exercises its powers prescribed in said act, and that it does hereby establish a county free library for the County of Inyo, State of California, as provided in said act.

Adopted September 15th, 1913.

N. J. Cooley Silas H. Reynolds

W. R. Ford J. H. Lubken

R. W. Thomas

As Chairman of the Board of Supervisors

Attest: W. L. Hunter

As Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Upon motion duly made and carried the following resolution was duly passed and adopted:

RESOLVED, That County Free Library Service to any community be contingent upon such communities furnishing housing and custodians.

Adopted: September 15th, 1913

From the minutes of September 16, 1913:

Recommendation having been received from J. L. Gillis, State Librarian, motion carried appointing Miss Ida G. Munson, County Librarian, term to begin October 1st, 1913. Bond of said Librarian fixed in the sum of $1000.

From the Minutes of September 17, 1913:

By motion made and carried, order made on September 16, 1913, appointing Miss Ida G. Munson, County Librarian, revoked and set aside, and Miss Jennie Brown appointed in her stead. Bond fixed in the sum of $1000.

County Library tax fixed at five cents.

From the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors for November 11, 1913:

Communication from C. W. Rickey, Supervisor of Mono County, regarding County Free Library service read and referred to Miss Jennie May Brown, County Librarian.

From the Minutes of November 12, 1913:

Motion carried that the County Librarian be authorized to purchase typewriter.

Miss Jennie May Brown, County Librarian, appeared before the Board, and general discussion was had in regard to Library matters.

Motion carried permitting the Supervisors' room to be used as a Library and Reading-room for this community, providing the residents thereof supply a custodian without any additional expense to the County. County Librarian

instructed accordingly.

Motion made and carried granting Jennie May Brown, ten days leave of absence from the County during the holiday season.

A moot point concerned the support of branches. The Supervisors finally conditioned the establishment of the County Library on the agreement of the towns to furnish room, custodian, and local expenses. It had been expected that the local branch would be provided with a room by its own town, and on September 12, the Bishop trustees had offered the library quarters in the City Hall. This did not work out, and shortly after the establishment of the library, a "Federated Library Committee" was appointed at Bishop, with a representative from each of the active clubs, with this personnel: From Athena, Mrs. J. S. McQueen; from the Woman's Improvement Club, Mrs. W. C. Parcher; from the Pinon Club, T. G. Watterson; from the Orpheus Club, Ray McIntosh; from the Chamber of Commerce, W. A. Chalfant. This committee secured rooms above Keough's market, redecorated and furnished them, secured Frank Kilpatrick for custodian, and underwrote the expenses. This first branch was established November 22. Miss Jennie May Brown, County Librarian, spent some time in Bishop, getting the books arranged, and preparing for the formal opening, which was made a social event under the auspices of the Library Committee.

It was promised that the State Library would furnish one thousand books and unlimited service, but that the county would use a "portion of the money in the purchase of books which will belong to the county". The estimate of $2500.00 for the entire service, including the librarian's salary, and $800.00 to $900.00 for books,

indicates the modest ideas of the founders. More generous treatment has fortunately always been the rule. It was doubtless the only way to get the start, but it has led to the amusing and sometimes annoying belief on the part of the people, still persisted in after eighteen years, that all the books belong to the State, and that we are in no way limited as to the amount we can have. This "unlimited service" sounds bold and rash even now. We qualify, saying "We will try to get you everything you ask for."

A "Mammoth Vaudeville Entertainment", to earn funds for the support of the Bishop Branch, was held December 2, and netted $125.00. In connection with the entertainment there was a little incident which occupied more than its share of the papers later. A baby buggy was an essential for one act, and the property man, a young bachelor, Harold Eaton, borrowed one, which he completely forgot to return. Later some one else wished to borrow it, and it was found on the back steps of the hall, badly weathered. Much fun was developed at Eaton's expense, his retort--also published in the local weekly--purposely adding to the hilarity. Throughout the year, entertainments for the library's support were held. All the sponsoring clubs assisted in the work, but evidently the major interest and the hardest work was the Improvement Club's.

The fact that Independence was the county seat, while Bishop was much the largest and most influential town, nearly fifty miles away by a "Ford highway", was a matter to be dealt with carefully. Miss Brown handled it by spending much time in Bishop and by giving very generous hours, three to five and seven to eight P. M. daily. She also gave much publicity to the library in the Bishop papers, which have continued their generous interest in the library to this day. The largest collection of books and magazines was

naturally at Bishop.

Books, in a library starting from nothing, were indeed a problem. The help of the State Library saved the day. From their Large Loans Collection came 1183 books of all classes. Individual requests from the State Library in the first annual report, representing eight months, numbered 285. The Woman's Improvement Club turned over 200 books to the Bishop Branch, the Tonopah Public Library sent a few discards to the Big Pine Branch, other gifts amounted to 80 volumes, and in the course of the first year, 834 books were purchased. The book purchases amounted to $618.77--before-the-war prices, evidently. In the first nine months 6,623 books were circulated.

Branches were established during the first year in Bishop, November 22; in Big Pine, November 29; Cartago, December 1; Independence, December 15; Bishop Grammar School, January 19, 1914; Manzanar, February 2, 1914; Lone Pine, April 16, 1914; Riverside School, March 1, 1914. The requirement that the various localities provide for the local expenses of the library proved very unpopular, and in the 1914-15 budget, expenses were allowed, chiefly as the result of petitions from Big Pine and Bishop.
The Big Pine petition states:

"Ninety per cent of the homes in this community are users of the library. The patronage is increasing . . . . . A monetary value cannot be placed on the use of the library to the citizens of this community.

"The financing of the Big Pine Branch of the Inyo County Library has been done by a few of its energetic people. Since so great a proportion of the number of our homes use the library, it seems to us, in equity and justice to all, that a small burden

required to maintain it, should be placed on the many rather than the few."

Dated September 19, 1914.

From the Bishop petition:

"The Library has been successful in this community, although only in its infancy, and has been patronized by all classes of people, men, women and children. Many books of a serious nature have been borrowed from the State Library."

Bishop continued to provide a room free of charge; a new grammar school was built there in 1914, and the old was remodeled to accommodate the library, the Woman's Improvement Club, the Athena Club, the City Hall and the fire apparatus. The library was to occupy the south part of the lower floor. But it grew, as libraries have a habit of doing, and in July 1917 the two clubs gave up their quarters, and the library moved its reference and reading room into the larger space. Except for that change, the Bishop Branch has never moved, and still is housed in the quarters that were condemned for school uses so many years ago.

Frank Kilpatrick did not remain long as the first custodian, and Mrs. L. Herzinger took the position. Evidently her idea of library work was to sit at the desk; she told some of the club members who suggested dusting, that they could do it if they wanted it done. After the county took over the local expense, in January 1915, Elizabeth Gibson, a high school girl, was appointed custodian.

Miss Brown's office at Independence, the county seat, was at once established in the Court House, in a wing which was also used by the supervisors for their meetings. Stationery, supplies, and traveling expenses accounted for almost all the expenditures for the first few months. Several book cupboards were purchased

from the State Library; these were fitted with doors and locks, and have been used--indeed are partly still used--in the smallest branches for their books. Rent and salaries came in after the tax was set in 1914. A typewriter was paid for July 1914. One was evidently used earlier than that, and one of the first expenditures authorized specifically was its purchase.

Even with the added responsibilities of the local support of branches, the tax rate was cut the second year to .02½, which made a very strict economy necessary--the bills for 1914-1915 totalled $2261.75, aside from the Librarian's salary. Book bills were $632.48. The Librarian's salary, paid from the salary fund, was $100.00 a month. Her "assistant" received $30.00 from November 1914. Previous to this, no assistant had been provided for. There had been several volunteer helpers--Mary Singlaub (now Mrs. Walter Levy), Christine J. English, Ruth M. Harrison, and her mother, Mrs. Frances D. Harrison (the wife of the Methodist minister), and Mary Montagu Wright, who began work July 1, 1914, and was the first paid assistant, leaving August, 1915, on a leave of absence, to see what she could do in college. Miss Wright is still vividly remembered in Independence. She was a crippled hunchback, and lived at Manzanar, six miles away, usually walking in the six miles over the sandy desert road, and home again after a day's work. But she was always cheerful and smiling, and her letters, found in the old file, are full of fun and wit. As for example:

"My dear Miss Brown:-

Do you recall a certain little instrument that can (if properly manipulated) make all manner of numbers from ten to ten thousand--and then some? Well, it has been working overtime of late. It zipped along beautifully into the thousands on the register pages. But when I tried to punch it up

and poke the numbers around to get eight thirty six "there wan't no sich animal." It positively refused to produce but one blank. Round and round went the numbers from nought to nine and ditto, ditto, till I dizzily ditched it to the first available man. He spent an interesting two hours with the little beast, after which he proudly returned it with a bit of paper neatly pasted on its three extra figures. It--the animal--behaved quite well the rest of the day. But don't you believe it had <u>really</u> been tamed.

"Yesterday I started it working, confidently expecting good things of it, and <u>all that it would do was eight thirty eight</u>. I changed it from left hole to middle and then to right, but it seemed to be perfectly satisfied with past achievements. Eight thirty eight was all that it knew.

"Just at the critical moment in dropped our "Ex-officio" Ruth. She doctored it faithfully from seven-thirty to eight-thirty, and finally arrived breathlessly at the same conclusion achieved by the man on the previous night. A bit of paper was neatly pasted over the three extra figures. Ruth then confessed that she had often spent many pleasant hours humoring the little creature.

"Conclusion: Please send a prescription that will instantly produce <u>three blanks</u>, or I warn you that the patient, neatly boxed and labelled, may arrive for treatment on an early mail.

Yours most sincerely,

Mary Wright"

It is pleasant to know that the plucky little cripple, who had to earn some of her college expenses, made a success there, so that her leave of absence became a resignation the following spring. She was later married, to Bert Healton, who is teaching in the High School at Lakeport. They have three children.

She was followed by Annice Healton, who was much liked in her position. She was a very quiet and conscientious girl, who later

went to library school, and is still in library work. These assistants were entirely untrained and inexperienced, as were their successors.

Miss Brown's health was never good while she was in Inyo. Evidently the altitude was too great, and she had many severe illnesses. Her position was not easy, since many of those who had opposed the Library in the beginning continued their hostility, and funds were also lacking for extension of the work. She was unable to pursue a sufficiently active program to establish many more branches after the first year. Keeler, Darwin, and Darwin School were added in March and April, 1915; Independence Grammar School, May, 1915.

At this time small collections were sent to a branch only once in three months. Books were purchased apparently in rather large lots, at quite long intervals. The larger branches were fortunate in keeping their assistants fairly well; no changes were made at Big Pine or Lone Pine in Miss Brown's time. Living conditions were bad, traveling was made hard by poor roads, inconvenient narrow-gauge train service, and primitive country hotels - or none. The county library plan was new, and all methods had to be invented or adapted. I do not know whether the fact that a heavy snowfall caused the library roof to fall in, in February, 1916, had anything to do with Miss Brown's asking for a leave of absence in April, or not - ill health and other reasons were given. She left on May 2, 1916, for Montana, and did not return. After some years she came back to California, but did not reenter library work. Recently she suffered a serious injury by being struck by an automobile on the streets of Los Angeles, and

is living, quite helpless, at her home in Los Angeles. A request for recollections of her work here remains unanswered. She is very likely unable to write at any length.

During her five months' leave, Miss Helen E. Vogleson, who is now County Librarian of Los Angeles County, had charge of the Inyo County Free Library as Acting Librarian. She made it her chief duty to make the rounds of the County and to clear up any misunderstandings that had arisen concerning the workings of a library. Bishop and Independence had so far neglected the return of State Library books that they had been deprived of State Library privileges, and great was the indignation thereat. This case was rectified, a new custodian, Mrs. Bessie T. Best, was secured for Bishop - Mrs. Bessie T. Best, now Assistant Librarian - and many other matters adjusted. On the recommendation of the expert auditing the county books, a new system of bookkeeping was installed, which is still in use, and brings pleasant words from the auditor's office. Miss Vogleson also adopted a new shelf and stock list, which gave more information. She began a campaign to enroll more of the schools for county library service, and systematically to induce in the Supervisors an attitude favorable to wider extension of the library system. She did bring in two schools before she left, at the beginning of the school year. She also used the Harvest Festival at Bishop to visualize the county library, and her exhibit there was a great success. She writes of her work here:

The position of these first librarians was a lonely one; there was no one of their own profession, or with any appreciation of what librarianship meant, within a long distance; hotels were primitive, and planned for men only, yet they were usually the only places to live. They shared offices with the Board of Supervisors, and were obliged to make way on the occasion of the Supervisor's meetings. In visiting branches, they often found no way of going by public conveyance, and had to hire cars, ride with a mail carrier, or beg a ride. None of these methods proved very satisfactory; distances are so great in Inyo County that automobile hire mounts very fast. A few years have made such a change in the comfort with which one may travel in this country, that one can scarce realize the situation at that time. One of the elder librarians used to tease the Inyo County Librarian by saying - "Oh, Inyo - that's the county that has only five bathtubs". He insisted that his authority was an Inyo County librarian, so we could only protest that very likely it was true - but ancient history. However, only a few years ago, a teacher newly appointed in the county, going into a hotel at Bishop and asking for a room with bath, got the reply from the clerk, as he spat his disgust, "Where do you think you are?" And the librarians learned to make their own fires in every sort of stove - and to carry their matches, since no hotel ever remembered to supply them.

On the other hand, no real hardships or dangers were ever suffered by the librarians, I think. The people are chiefly of good American stock, and have the kindness and hospitality associated with the mountain and desert folk. A woman may drive anywhere alone in safety, and seldom has to change a tire or doctor

an engine, unless the difficulty occurs on a road too rarely traveled to bring help. The small annoyances and little disagreeable things were the natural and unconsidered conditions pertaining in what was - and is - decidedly a man's country".

After Miss Vogleson's and Miss Brown's simultaneous resignation on September 18, 1916, Miss Blanche Chalfant was appointed Librarian, arriving October 9 to take up the work. She was a native daughter of Inyo, her father having established the Inyo Independent in Independence in 1870, and having lived many years in Independence and Bishop. Her brother, W. A. Chalfant of the Inyo Register, has gained a reputation as historian by his books, "The Story of Inyo", "Outposts of Civilization", and "Death Valley: the Facts". Miss Chalfant, graduating in 1914 with the first class of the California State Library School, had had a varied experience in library work, although it had been only two years since she entered it. She came directly from Plumas County, where she had organized the county system. She had the advantage of a thorough acquaintance with the place and the people, and the disadvantage of being connected in people's minds with some of her brother's political antagonisms.

Building on Miss Brown's and Miss Vogleson's foundations, she extended the county system to the elementary schools and to the smaller communities, the last school joining in 1920, shortly before her resignation. She writes:-

"I returned to Inyo October, 1916. At Institute time, during the holidays that year, Mrs. Henshall came to Bishop and talked at Institute, and met most of the teachers. It was fearfully cold, the ground covered with snow, and everything frozen solid; and after one of the sessions a man came with a sleigh, and took a lot of teachers for a ride, and so Mrs. Henshall got her first sleigh ride.

She returned in April, 1917 (and again it was cold and snowing a little), and we covered the county, explaining the work to the trustees. . . . Taking a short cut over a lonely road from Keeler to Olancha, a bearing burned out of Bill Gibson's new Studebaker. He managed to get in to Olancha about 5 P.M., and had to phone to Independence to have some one bring a car to take us back. It was midnight before the car arrived, so we spent the evening attending a dance in the school house. A phonograph played the music, and the babies, rolled up in blankets and shawls, slept on the benches a la "The Virginian".

"There was other car trouble on that trip, and the day that Mrs. Henshall started back to Sacramento, as we left Independence, the car stopped, so we were put into a meat truck and taken over to the station [five miles], but we made the train!"

[Eleven schools joined as a result of these trips.]

"The war work [of 1917-1918] consisted principally of sending out all sorts of food bulletins and thrift material, etc. There was nothing outstanding that the library did.

"When the library was organized a thousand volumes had been loaned by the State Library, and these later were purchased. As none of them had ever been catalogued, and if I'm not mistaken most of the new books purchased outright by the library had been only temporarily catalogued [Very full shelf list and stock information], a large part of my time was spent in calling in these books and cataloguing them." [This work was not completed until 1927-28, as other work crowded in.]

"The library was located in the Supervisors' room, and when the Board was in session, the typewriter and such other equipment as was movable and necessary was taken into a very small room across

the hall, where the librarian and her assistant stayed during the day, going back and forth to get the books as the patrons came in. During the evening, the work was carried on from the main reading-room. As there was no janitor available in the evening, in order to prepare the room for the library visitors, after the Board had adjourned, the library girls had to clean the place. How we hated to carry out the dirty old cuspidors!!

"The Supervisors gave their approval, and meetings were held in Bishop and Big Pine, to see what could be done about obtaining Carnegie building for the county. The plan included buildings for Big Pine, Bishop, and Lone Pine, but before plans had gotten very far under way, the Carnegie Corporation announced there was no more money available for that purpose, so that ended that matter."

In January, 1919 the Library was moved to the Norman House Annex on account of crowded conditions in the Courthouse that made a readjustment of offices necessary. The room it had occupied was assigned to the County Clerk. It was an annex to the building, used in the first place as a jail. After the new Courthouse was built, it was sold to the local church, and it is now used as a Primary Sunday-School room!

The decision to move the library was finally taken suddenly, and Miss Chalfant returned from a trip to find it ousted and in some confusion, naturally. However, she writes:

"The Library was moved during one of those cold north winds. The prisoners did all the work of moving. I remember how much pride one of them took in polishing the stove so beautifully. The men were very particular that everything had to be fixed just right."

In the effort to handle back cataloguing, of which Miss Chalfant speaks in her letter, she secured Miss Minnie K. Brown, as

special cataloguer, for three months, September to November, 1917. Miss Annice Healton, assistant when Miss Jennie May Brown left, had just resigned to attend college. Miss Ethel Newby entered September 1917, as general assistant. She remained until October, 1919, when after her marriage to John Singlaub, Jr., she resigned, and Mrs. Jessie Roeper took her place.

Miss Chalfant thinks her war work was of no consequence, but records on file indicate that she led these small communities in doing their full share in gathering books and funds for the war libraries. There is a receipt for 523 books sent from Bishop to Camp Kearney, and a record of over $20.00 gathered at Darwin.

Mrs. Best, then custodian at Bishop, remembers an amusing incident of gathering these books. There was tendency to get rid of books unsuitable for any purpose, and she quietly disposed of these, but one day some books came in so nicely wrapped that she hesitated to unwrap them. Deciding to do so, she found them well interleaved with anti-Catholic tracts. This was too much - she examined every one, and removed the various sorts of propaganda.

The southeastern part of the County is a sort of stepchild. It is so far separated from Owens Valley by desert and mountain that the region on the southeast side of Death Valley, comprising rich mineral and borax deposits, and some land fit for very interesting and unusual developments in agriculture and stock-raising, had very little attention from the county officers. It was traversed by the Tonopah and Tide-water rail road, but that had connection with the south. Small communities here were Ryan, the mine of the Pacific Coast Borax Company, Death Valley Junction, where their mill was situated, Shoshone, and Tecopa. Schools were a problem, and were

for a time privately supported, but by 1918 there were three public schools. The people then asked for library branches, but the Supervisors felt the distance from the center (Independence) was too great. Therefore it was proposed that a contract be made between San Bernardino County and Inyo County, by which the County Librarian of San Bernardino County should visit and supervise the library branches in this region. This contract is still in force, although for some years the Inyo County Librarian has been able to make the visit. It provides that Inyo County shall pay traveling expenses "from that point in San Bernardino where actual services to Inyo County commence." Miss Waters, San Bernardino County Librarian, made several trips into this section, and made very full, and most valuable, reports of her work and the conditions she found there. On her first visit she was warned not to attempt any part of the trip by car, since the roads were nearly impassable, but to stick to the railway. The officers courteously held the train for her to enable her to finish her work at one place, and she rode back for her connections on a hand-car.

The people of that region have ever been most appreciative of the library service, patient with the delays occasioned by the distance and the roundabout connections, and good comrades to work with.

Miss Chalfant's term as Inyo County Librarian extended from October, 1st, 1920, when she resigned to take a position in the Los Angeles Public Library. After experience in several libraries, she went to Butte County as Librarian, resigning on her marriage to D. N. Wheeler of San Jose, whom she had met in Independence - "the most important thing that happened there," he says.

On Miss Chalfant's resignation, Miss Anne Margrave was appointed, March 10, 1920, beginning work March 15.

Miss Margrave came from Santa Barbara Public Library, and had never imagined quite such a land as Inyo; waking at Mojave, she watched the mountains and the desert with increasing qualms. On changing at Owenyo to the "Slim Princess", and taking a late breakfast of heavy fried foods at the "Box-Car Restaurant" (literally named), she tried to balance against these indications of her future surroundings, the glorious sharp air and the splendid mountains. At Kearsarge Station she took the mail-stage for the five-mile ride to Independence, which to her disappointment proved to be well down in the valley, not actually in the mountains.

Following her predecessor's suggestion, she went to the Norman House to take a room, which Miss Chalfant had said was the best available. It proved to be cold and shabby, the paper faded and with wide cracks, the stove rusty, the key missing and the latch defective. Could she stay? The question was becoming acute by afternoon, when she had glanced at the library quarters and the book collection, had watched the clouds of dust fly down the street as the usual spring gale arose, and had begun to be a prey to home-sickness. But after lunch, she went to hunt up the County Clerk and the local Supervisor, found both very cordial and very willing to take any pains to help her get started, took another look at the wonderful sky-line and a deep breath of mountain air - and adopted Inyo County as her own.

At this time, Mrs. Jessie Roeper was installed as assistant. Mrs. Roeper had the most natural charm of any young woman I have ever known. At this time, she was like a kitten in her playfulness and

grace. It was hard to connect her with any responsibilities or steady work, and no one would have believed that she would remain in the Library, more and more able to do her full share, for nearly eleven years, until her tragic death in the summer of 1930. Her constant development was one of the most interesting I ever saw.

Other helpers were: At Bishop, Mrs. Bessie Taylor Best, who had been custodian since 1916, with the exception of one year, when Miss Josephine Powers held the position. On Mrs. Best's return to her desk, she remained there until July, 1930, when she came to Independence as Assistant, and Miss Powers came back to the Bishop Branch. At Big Pine was Bessa Robinson, who had been appointed in 1916, taking the place of her sister Dottie (Mrs. Howard Willson). The two sisters have been Big Pine's only custodians, and scarcely a word of complaint of the conduct of the branch has ever been heard. At Lone Pine, the postmistress, Mrs. Alice Tate, had had charge since the library had had a home.

The County Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Mamie A. Clarke, was also a firm friend and efficient helper of the Library. Her successors have also been good friends and good comrades.

Most of the county officials (especially the Auditor, T. M. Kendrick), and the Supervisors also proved to have a most friendly attitude, although not many were users of the Library to any extent.

In one of her first contacts, Miss Margrave was more lucky than wise - and luckier than she knew at the time. An expert was at work on the County books, and on meeting her, he promptly asked her what authority the County Librarian had for certain acts. Miss Margrave as promptly quoted law and precedent to him, and nothing more was said. It later appeared that this expert was a devotee of the exact

interpretation of law, and many of the officers were annoyed by his objections to their practices, but the advantage to Miss Chalfant in the justification of her acts was as nothing to the reputation gained by the ready answer, accidental though it was.

Almost the first trouble that came to light after Miss Margrave's arrival was her discovery that it had been arranged to move the Library from the Norman House Annex, the proprietor wanting the two little rooms for the summer demand. Although the rooms were crowded, inconvenient, and poorly lighted and heated, they seemed fully as desirable as the ones to which it was proposed to move, so the Librarian at once set to work, and succeeded in persuading the parties concerned to accept a compromise. Since work was about to begin on the new Courthouse, which would give the Library a permanent home, it seemed best to endure inconveniences and the higher rental demanded, rather than to move twice.

These quarters had been too small from the first, and were increasingly so as time went on. They consisted of two rooms that had been added to the hotel for bedrooms, and none too large for that purpose. The larger was about 12′ x 15′, and the smaller about 12′ x 12′. Books and meagre office equipment took up nearly all the available space, but there were usually two or three children under foot when one tried to get to the shelves. Books not immediately needed were stored in the upper rooms of the jail. It was during this time that the Librarian decided to allow all magazines and usual reference material to circulate, so as to cut down reading room use to a minimum.

Fortunately this was a temporary phase. In December, 1921, the new Courthouse was ready for occupancy. Quarters for the County Li-

brary were provided in the basement, which because of the slope of the land was more like a ground floor, well lighted and convenient of access, warm in winter and cool in summer, with a fine view of the grandest range of the High Sierras from the western windows. It seemed much like heaven to the library workers, with one drawback. Much to the surprise of the Supervisors, even before the new room was ready for occupancy, the Librarian began to ask for "more". They offered a small vault for storage space; she examined the premises and asked for the unoccupied (and unfinished) part of the basement. This was finally granted and gave an abundance of room at that time; it is now beginning to be crowded again.

Furnishing had been confined to the necessities from the start, but on going into the new building, the furnishing of the Library was included with that of the rest of the Courthouse. The officers were asked to file a list of what they desired, and the Librarian made out a careful though conservative list. In some mysterious manner, this list was lost, and when the bids came to be opened, nothing was provided for the Library but tables, chairs, two desks, and wall shelving. These were all of the business type rather than library style. Protests were unavailing, because the Supervisors feared that to allow one officer to add anything would bring down a flood of requests on their heads. But later on, gradual additions and changes were made from the Courthouse furnishing fund.

Local service for Independence has always been taken care of from the central office, and janitor, heat and light provided with that for other county offices. Housing for the library in the branches has been a difficult problem. Mention has been made of the effort

to secure Carnegie buildings for the larger ones. This came to nothing, although the effort was repeated later. Then the Supervisors expressed themselves as favorable to a plan similar to that being followed in Kern County, of providing a branch building annually or semi-annually until the larger branches were so housed. It was felt that the towns benefited should ask for the improvement, and the Librarian went to Bishop to encourage a campaign which she felt sure would be welcomed cordially. This was in the summer of 1922, and the night before, efforts at a compromise between the City of Los Angeles and the local irrigation companies, of which great things had been hoped, had blown up in wild gusts of passion. No one could really think of anything but the prospect of losing their water supply, which meant the communities' life-blood.

The opening of the County Library was almost co-incident with the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct - an omen, perhaps, for the history of the Library, as of all civic undertakings in Inyo County, has been greatly conditioned by the activities of the City of Los Angeles in providing itself with a water supply. Again and again the Supervisors and the Librarian have been ready to undertake a building program, or some other constructive enlargement, when some new phase of the long-drawn-out quarrel with "the City" would appear which made it necessary to postpone or abandon these plans. Finally, the decision of Los Angeles to purchase the private property of all Owens Valley, rural and town, makes the very idea of building branch libraries seem absurd.

Just before this last decision, in 1928, the Board of Supervisors built in Lone Pine a reinforced concrete building to house the justice

court room, the local jail, and the branch library, with the intention of bringing together all the county property in that town. By using a corner lot, the library entrance is on a different street from that of the court-room, and the connection with a more disagreeable side of county government is not at all apparent. The room is large and light, and is furnished with Library Bureau furniture.

This is the only branch built by the county. At Big Pine, the branch collection has been housed for nearly two years in the American Legion building, which the Big Pine Legion Post turned back to the County. It is not entirely satisfactory, and may not remain the home of the Branch.

Although it has been the policy of the Library to hold the same custodians at a Branch as long as seemed possible, to gain the advantages of continuity of service, and to increase the custodian's interest in the work, only three have made any attempt to advance in the library profession. Miss Powers and Mrs. Best have taken courses at Riverside Library Service School, and Miss Nellie Reynolds, custodian at Lone Pine since the autumn of 1925, has had a successful course in book-selection, by correspondence, under Miss Helen Haines. Mrs. Best is the only assistant to have entered the office with either training or library experience.

Aside from the four branches of Big Pine, Bishop, Independence and Lone Pine, we have very small collections of books, variously housed as conditions permit. Branches are established, flourish for a longer or a shorter time, and are discontinued on account of the breaking up of a camp or the selling out of a community. The improvement of roads and the increase of automobile travel tends toward

consolidation. Very few of the custodians of these little branches do any interesting or outstanding work, since it is a side issue. There remains in memory the good work of Phoebe Dixon at Cartago, of Lionel Malley at Ryan, and of M. J. Garity at Death Valley. At Tecopa, Mrs. V. V. Davis, living over three miles from the station, has been a real blessing to her neighbors. I quote from a letter:

"I might also add that the location of the Branch is ideal, as it is a real desert oasis, and when one looks for a quiet place to read, none can compare with this." - J. H. Jensen, E. M.

An unusual method of transportation was used to get the books back and forth from the Cerro Gordo Branch, 1917-1919. Cerro Gordo, an old mine with a thrilling and at times gory history, is situated in the mountains above Keeler, and the road thereto is famous. You had to be drunk to drive it. Ore was transported to Keeler by means of an air tramway, and by this too the boxes of books were carried, swinging on a cable. Several queer examples of housing the books have been known in Inyo County, for example, Owenyo's. There the library, like everything else in town, is in a box-car. Here too a sweet little custodian, Mrs. Helen Ann Strong, has been in charge for about eight years, and is doing excellent work.

An example of branches in a mining region is afforded by our Leadfield Branch. Leadfield, one of Julian's enterprises, came up with a rush - over two thousand people in residence, improved roads over the mountains, good buildings, and so forth. A year later, all was abandoned. Our library work lasted little more than a year. There were three custodians, all "mail-order", since the camp, 50 miles away by air-line, was about ten times as far by train and stage

from the nearest Nevada town. The Librarian's one visit was not made until about the end of the time. With all these vicissitudes, not a book was lost.

Since Miss Chalfant had extended the service of the County Library over practically the whole of the County, changes during the last twelve years have been chiefly adjustments and gradual developments. Collections as a whole have more than doubled, the number of books kept at the branches greatly increased, the reference collections improved, etc. The book collection from the first showed the effect of trained buyers and good book selection aids, although quite a number of books were added from school collections turned in. These were good as to content, else they were not added, but were not always attractive editions.

It was always desired to develop a picture collection for schoolroom walls, and several abortive attempts were made to do so. In 1930 it was finally worked out, and is proving a most delightful and much appreciated addition to our school service. It is to be extended to the branches.

Maps, globes, charts, stereographs, music records, small pictures, periodicals from the files, and subscriptions, pamphlets, text books, reference books - all have been provided for the schools, and occasionally for the individual borrower, from an early date. The recent addition of mimeograph service enables us to make much better use of these.

We have for three years used the method of dividing such school texts as are adapted to this handling into two groups, to go to one-half of the schools in the fall, and to the other in the second half-

year. We are obliged to make only one exchange, since our staff could not handle a general exchange rapidly enough to make it workable except when there is a short vacation - for the schools.

A surprising result of this plan, is that the teachers use the books better when they know they can have them only half the year.

One of the first requests to come to the newly-established Inyo County Library, was that service be extended to Mono County. Of course it was impossible at that time. Repeated requests came from Mono County citizens, but there was a decided reluctance on the part of the supervisors of both counties to enter into any agreement. "Bitterly opposed", was Mr. Naylor's statement of his position when Miss Margrave broached the subject. Later, he yielded to persuasion sufficiently to approve, most unenthusiastically, her going into Mono County, in the spring of 1929, with Miss Edith Gantt, then State Library Visitor, to see what the residents of Mono County really felt. To the great astonishment of Miss Margrave, when they returned with a contract in hand, he renewed his opposition to such an extent that it was impossible to get the agreement of the Inyo County Board to the contract. One of the other four Supervisors, who had previously expressed themselves favorably, had changed his mind on account of the buying program of the City of Los Angeles, which, he said, made our situation too precarious to admit of our taking up any other obligations.

The arrangement with San Bernardino County for the visiting of the branches east of Death Valley, while still legally in force, has not been in use since 1926, when Miss Margrave finally succeeded in going into that country, due to the courtesy of C. A. Collins, at

that time Sheriff. He made a trip over there to look into matters in general, and was accompanied by one of the Supervisors, by Mrs. Collins, and by Miss Margrave. To reach the four little branches, and the four schools, they traveled 804 miles, across Inyo, Kern, San Bernardino and Mono Counties of California, and three counties of Nevada. Most of this was over unimproved desert roads. On the first day, from eleven in the morning until seven at night, they did not pass an inhabited house, and met only two cars - one lost, and the other anxiously inquiring where they could get gasoline. Even at that, riding in a big car, over signed roads, it took one's best imaginative effort to picture the state of mind and body of those first emigrants who came that way.

By the next time the County Librarian made that trip, the road across Death Valley had been improved, and by the new route they went in much less time and with much greater comfort. The little County Superintendent, Mrs. Ruth W. Leete, was driver, and her young daughter Harriet sat back with the baggage much of the time, hiding her head on the high grades. Three more trips have been made since then, but the work becomes narrowed down, as mining has decreased, and the region has become a winter resort for the eastern tourist, who is now able to visit in perfect safety and comfort a region famed as one of terror and mystery.

The hardships of the present staff consist almost wholly in having somewhat overheated quarters and decidedly more work than can properly be handled. Only two persons are in the Independence office, taking care of all the public and school library work for 6,500 people, scattered over more than ten thousand square miles of terri-

tory, and using nearly eight books per capita annually. Occasional help has been given from the county jail, and in the past few months, tension has been decidedly loosened by the help of three high school girls, who are taking a "laboratory course" in the library.

Custodians' meetings have been attempted several times, but the great distances and inconvenient transportation arrangements have made them very unsatisfactory. Letters to the custodians and to the teachers have had better results, but each year we strike two seasons in which we cannot get out a news-letter for lack of time. For the same reason, with lack of funds added, we have not been able to make as frequent visits to the branches as is done in the better-organized libraries.

From the beginning the success of the Inyo County Free Library has been very largely dependent upon the State Library. It would surely not have been established, at least not at that time, without the push given by the State Library Organizer. Service began much more quickly and more fully because of the shipment from the Large Loans Collection. The demands of the more difficult and discriminating patron have always been handled by special loans from the State Library. During the first hard years, especially, the State Library was always at the back of the Librarian, advising, encouraging, suggesting. In later times, when laws and rumors of laws have been the disturbing element, the constant watchfulness of the State Library has guarded our interests. Salary increases have twice come with the weight of the State Library's influence added to local support. And daily the limited resources and small book fund of the County Library are enlarged and released for more pressing local use by the books

freely borrowed from the State Library. No club, no special class, no discussion or debating group, no pageant or celebration, no unusual or extensively pursued interest, but owes its debt to our mother institution.

The Board of Supervisors have always supported the Inyo County Library as generously as they felt possible. Not lack of interest, but the necessity of balancing demands, has kept our income small. The tax rate for the first year was set at .05. For some reason, perhaps because of the estimate of $2500.00 as ample for all library expenses, which was published during the first campaign, it was cut the next year to .02½; for 1915-16; raised to .04; for 1916-17, to .05; for 1917-18, dropped to .04; for 1918-19, .04; for 1919-20, .05. It has remained at .05 since that time, despite efforts of the Librarian, supported by the Auditor, to raise it. Even now there are echoes of the alleged promises that it would never cost so much - the reports of these promises, which do not seem to be on record, ranging from .02½ to .04. No suggestion has come to the Librarian's ears of any attempt to cut down on account of the present hard times.

The Supervisors have always been very courteous and helpful in connection with the work of the Library, with one or two exceptions, better forgotten than remembered. They have not always seen eye to eye with the Librarian, but on the other hand they have often taken the lead in improvements, as in building and furnishing the Lone Pine Branch, in providing the present commodious quarters for the Big Pine Branch, and in many ways both large and small. Mr. Naylor has been especially helpful because of his residence at Independence, and his long experience.

The present condition and status of the Library is quite satisfactory, when compared with that of other and greater institutions at this time. For the last two years, no attempt at all has been made to enlarge, but on the other hand, no cut of any kind has been made. Our future, together with that of all Inyo County, is very doubtful; but, tired of forebodings, we are attempting to act as though there were a long and useful life ahead. We have been especbuilding up the reference collection and the more long-lived nonfiction, and we hope to work out some solution of the housing of the branches in Bishop and Big Pine. Unquestionably, library work here will always be done in rather a small way, as unless conditions change in ways impossible to foresee, we will have no resident or scholarly class, and serious use of the library will be sporadic and shifting. Yet there is no question that in its eighteen years, it has contributed its part toward the intellectual development of our people, changing serious mental habits much more than it has changed habits of recreational reading.

Independence,
January 30, 1932

Inyo County Librarians:

Miss Ida G. Munson, appointed September 16, 1913 (Did not qualify)
Miss Jennie May Brown, appointed September 17, 1913
Began work, October 1, 1913
Left on leave of absence, May 2, 1916
Resigned, September 18, 1916
Miss Helen E. Vogleson, appointed Acting Librarian, April 11, 1916
Resigned, September 18, 1916
Miss Blanche Chalfant, appointed about October 1, 1916
Arrived to take up work, October 9, 1916
Resigned, February 10, 1920
Resignation accepted, March 10, 1920
Miss Anne Margrave, appointed March 10, 1920
Began work, March 15, 1920

Assistants, Independence:

(In 1913, none were appointed. Volunteer helpers included:
Mary Singlaub
Christine J. English
Ruth M. Harrison
Mrs. Frances D. Harrison)
Mary Montagu Wright, July 1, 1914
Annice Healton, March 16, 1916 (temporary appointment, August, 1915)
Minnie K. Brown, September-November, 1917
Ethel Newby, Sept.?1917 - Oct. 1919 (Mrs. J. J. Singlaub, Jr.)
Mrs. Jessie Roeper, November 1919 to July 1930
Mrs. Bessie Taylor Best, July 1930 to ~~date~~ July, 1946.

Custodians:

Big Pine: Dottie Robinson, 1913 to September, 1916
Bessa Robinson, September, 1916 to date

Bishop: Frank Kilpatrick, 1913-1914) Under Bishop Library Committee
Mrs. L. Herzinger, 1914-1915)
Elizabeth Gibson, January, 1915 to July, 1916
Bessie Taylor Best, July, 1916 to October, 1918
Josephine Powers, October, 1918 to August, 1919
Bessie Taylor Best, ~~August~~ Dec., 1919 to July 15, 1930
Josephine Powers, July 15, 1930 to date

Lone Pine; A. M. Bonner, 1914
Mrs. Alice Tate, June, 1914
C. G. Woelker, May to September, 1925
Nellie E. Reynolds, October 15, 1925 to date

Tax Rates: 1913-1914, .05
1914-1915, .02½
1915-1916, .04
1916-1917, .05
1917-1918, .04
1918-1919, .04
1919-1920, .05 No change to date